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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 ZAGREB 000284

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SUBJECT: DASD RICARDEL LEADS BILATERAL DEFENSE
CONSULTATIONS IN CROATIA

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[1B.](#) 02 STATE 163905

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR LAWRENCE ROSSIN FOR REASONS 1.5 (B,D)

SUMMARY

[11.](#) (C) FROM FEBRUARY 3-5, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE MIRA RICARDEL LED A TEAM OF U.S. POLICY MAKERS FROM OSD, THE JOINT STAFF, MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD AND US EUROPEAN COMMAND IN BILATERAL DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS WITH CROATIA. IN MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT MESIC, PRIME MINISTER RACAN, DEFENSE MINISTER ANTUNOVIC AND CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF LUCIC, RICARDEL URGED FURTHER PROGRESS ON DEFENSE REFORM AND PRESSED FOR RESOLUTION OF LEGAL ISSUES OBSTRUCTING CLOSER U.S.-CROATIAN MILITARY COOPERATION. RICARDEL PRAISED CROATIA'S COMMITMENT AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM AND URGED GOC LEADERS TO PRESS FORWARD ON PRIORITIES RAISED DURING THE RECENT REVIEW OF CROATIA'S FIRST ANNUAL NATIONAL PROGRAM UNDER NATO'S MAP PROGRAM. ON FEBRUARY 4, DASD RICARDEL AND DEFMIN ANTUNOVIC SIGNED AN AGREEMENT TO HELP CROATIA DEVELOP ITS CAPABILITY TO COMBAT PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION.

[12.](#) (C) PM RACAN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE TO TIGHTEN CONTROL OVER CROATIA'S BORDERS AND TO COMBAT WMD PROLIFERATION. HE DESCRIBED THE KEY REFORMS HIS GOVERNMENT HAS IMPLEMENTED SINCE IT CAME TO POWER IN 2000, MOST OF WHICH HAVE COME AT A HIGH PRICE, BUT ALL OF WHICH MAKE CROATIA A LEADING CANDIDATE FOR INTEGRATION INTO EURO-ATLANTIC

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INSTITUTIONS. BOTH RACAN AND DEFMIN ANTUNOVIC ASSERTED THAT THE CABINET WILL PASS A MEASURE ON FEBRUARY 6 WHICH WILL ALLOW USN SHIPS VISITING CROATIAN PORTS TO IMPLEMENT NECESSARY FORCE PROTECTION PRACTICES, WHICH SHOULD CLEAR THE WAY FOR U.S. SHIP VISITS TO RESUME.

[13.](#) (C) CROATIA IS SERIOUS ABOUT ITS NATO ASPIRATIONS AND HAS BECOME A NET CONTRIBUTOR TO SECURITY IN THE REGION. BUT CROATIA'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP MUST FIRST IDENTIFY AS A NATIONAL PRIORITY AND THEN ALLOCATE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO ADDRESS THE STRUCTURAL CHANGES NEEDED IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY AND THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES. IT MUST ALSO BEGIN TO ADDRESS THE SERIOUS POLITICAL AND SOCIETAL ISSUES ADDRESSED IN ITS RECENT NATO REVIEW. END SUMMARY.

[14.](#) (C) FROM FEBRUARY 3-5 DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE MIRA RICARDEL VISITED ZAGREB FOR THE FIRST FORMAL BILATERAL DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS (BDC) WITH THE CROATIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. WITH DASD RICARDEL WERE GENERAL EUGENE ANDREOTTI, ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD (CROATIA'S STATE PARTNER), REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD JASKOT OF US EUROPEAN COMMAND'S J5, AND ALAN VAN EGMOND, DOD'S DIRECTOR OF WESTERN EURASIA AND BALKANS AFFAIRS. DASD RICARDEL MET SEPARATELY WITH PRESIDENT STIPE MESIC, PRIME MINISTER IVICA RACAN, DEFENSE MINISTER ZELJKA ANTUNOVIC AND WITH THE NEWLY APPOINTED CHIEF OF CROATIA'S GENERAL STAFF, JOSIP LUCIC. THREE BDC WORKING GROUPS DISCUSSED INTEROPERABILITY WITH NATO, DEFENSE REFORM AND MODERNIZATION, AND BORDER SECURITY AND COUNTER - PROLIFERATION.

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BILATERAL DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS

[15.](#) (C) THE FORMAL STRUCTURE OF THE BDC CONSISTED OF AN OPENING PLENARY SESSION FOLLOWED BY THREE WORKING GROUP MEETINGS TO FOCUS ON KEY ISSUES OF BILATERAL CONCERN. IN HER OPENING STATEMENT, DASD RICARDEL RECOGNIZED CROATIA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WAR ON TERRORISM, HIGHLIGHTING THE INTERDICTION OF THE M/V BOKA STAR, THE CONTRIBUTION OF WEAPONS AND MUNITIONS TO THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY AND THE IMMINENT DEPLOYMENT OF A MILITARY POLICE PLATOON TO AFGHANISTAN IN SUPPORT OF ISAF. EUCOM'S RADM JASKOT GAVE A BRIEFING ON THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM, HIGHLIGHTING THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY PARTNERS. DASD RICARDEL FOLLOWED WITH A HARD-HITTING PRESENTATION ON THE CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGERS PRESENTED BY THE PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, PARTICULARLY THE NEXUS BETWEEN TERRORIST GROUPS, STATES WHICH SPONSOR TERRORISM AND WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION.

[16.](#) (C) CROATIAN PRESENTATIONS TO THE PLENARY SESSION COVERED CROATIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR ON TERRORISM AND TO OTHER PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS. DASD RICARDEL WELCOMED CROATIA'S EAGERNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN SO MANY OPERATIONS, BUT QUESTIONED IF CROATIA HAS A FISCAL PLAN OR HAS IDENTIFIED SPECIFIC RESOURCES TO CONDUCT SUCH OPERATIONS. ASSISTANT

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	AC-01	DCP-01	NRRC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OES-00	OIC-02
	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00
	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00
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DEFMIN JELENA GRCIC POLIC, NOTING AN INTERAGENCY PAPER IN
PROGRESS, RESPONDED THAT THE ISAF DEPLOYMENT WILL BE THE
FIRST INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY WHICH THE MOD'S BUDGET WILL NOT
BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ABSORBING; THE CABINET TOOK A DECISION TO
FINANCE THIS ACTIVITY WITH A SEPARATE LINE ITEM. THE MOD
HOPES TO REPLICATE THIS PRACTICE FOR OTHER PEACE SUPPORT
OPERATIONS AND FOR FUNDING DEFENSE REFORMS LIKE DOWNSIZING,
WHICH ARE FAR BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THE MOD'S BUDGET.

WORKING GROUPS PRODUCE CONCRETE RESULTS

¶7. (C) THE THREE WORKING GROUPS DISCUSSED THE BROAD RANGE OF
ISSUES RELATING TO U.S. - CROATIA BILATERAL DEFENSE
RELATIONS. FOLLOWING SUBSTANTIVE PRESENTATIONS OF CROATIA'S
REFORM PLANS, U.S. PARTICIPANTS PROPOSED SEVERAL CONCRETE
AREAS WHERE USG EXPERIENCE AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS MIGHT BE
ABLE TO HELP ACHIEVE MOD GOALS. WORKING GROUPS REVIEWED
CROATIA'S PROGRESS IN NATO'S MAP PROGRAM, DISCUSSED THE USE
OF U.S. ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT CROATIA'S DEFENSE REFORM,
MODERNIZATION AND TRAINING GOALS, AND BORDER SECURITY AND
COUNTER-PROLIFERATION. AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE WORKING
GROUPS AGREED:

- TO FORM AN INFORMAL BILATERAL LEGAL WORKING GROUP BETWEEN
EUCOM AND CROATIAN MOD EXPERTS (AUGMENTED AS NECESSARY) TO
MOVE QUICKLY TO RESOLVE OUTSTANDING IMPEDIMENTS TO MILITARY
COOPERATION, AND

- THAT THE GOC WOULD FORM A JOINT CIVILIAN-MILITARY
INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP TO ADDRESS EXPORT CONTROL AND
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BORDER SECURITY ISSUES. THIS GROUP WILL SERVE AS THE GOC'S
INTERFACE WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND WOULD HELP
COORDINATE AND DIRECT ASSISTANCE EFFORTS.

¶8. (U) THE BDC CONCLUDED BY DECIDING TO MEET AGAIN IN A
YEAR'S TIME WITH THE U.S. HOSTING.

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BILATERAL MEETINGS
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PM RACAN: PROGRESS TOWARD NATO AND EU MEMBERSHIP

¶9. (C) IN A MEETING WITH DASD RICARDEL AND THE AMBASSADOR,
PM RACAN DESCRIBED IN DETAIL HOW CROATIA'S PROGRESS ON
REFORMS MAKES IT A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR INTEGRATION INTO
EURO-ATLANTIC INSTITUTIONS. DESPITE THE INTRA-COALITION
BRINKSMANSHIP THAT SO OFTEN CROWDS THE HEADLINES, RACAN SAID
HIS GOVERNMENT IS STABLE AND WILL SERVE OUT ITS FULL TERM.
COMMITMENT TO ECONOMIC REFORM HAS PRODUCED DURABLE RESULTS,
THE MACROECONOMIC SITUATION IS STABLE, GDP GROWTH IS EXPECTED
TO REACH 5 PERCENT THIS YEAR, AND UNEMPLOYMENT HAS BEEN
DECREASING FOR THE PAST TEN MONTHS. RACAN STATED THAT HIS
GOVERNMENT WILL NOT SLACK OFF THE PACE OF REFORMS IN ITS LAST
YEAR, AND PLEDGED HIS COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD
WITH REFORMS IN THE MILITARY.

¶10. (C) ACCORDING TO RACAN, CROATIA IS SUCCESSFULLY
ADDRESSING THE POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF NATO AND THE EU. HE
CLAIMED CROATIA SHOULD HAVE "SOLVED" THE PROBLEM OF MINORITY
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RIGHTS WITH PASSAGE OF A PROGRESSIVE CONSTITUTIONAL LAW ON
NATIONAL MINORITIES, BUT ADMITTED THAT IMPLEMENTATION IS
INCOMPLETE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. RACAN DEFENDED GOC ACTION ON
REFUGEE RETURN; CROATIA'S POST-WAR "ETHNIC MOSAIC" WILL NEVER
BE THE SAME AS IT WAS BEFORE 1991, BUT THE GOC IS COMMITTED
TO SUPPORTING THE RETURN OF ALL THOSE WHO WANT TO COME BACK.
FULLY 100,000 HAVE ALREADY RETURNED SINCE 2000, HE EXPECTS
ANOTHER 20,000 WILL SEEK TO RETURN IN 2003. THE GOC HAS
COMMITTED 300 MILLION EUROS IN ITS 2003 BUDGET TO

RECONSTRUCTION AND RETURN; ALL THOSE WHO FORMALLY EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO RETURN TO CROATIA BY THE END OF 2002 WILL BE ACCOMMODATED BY THE END OF 2003, RACAN CLAIMED.

¶11. (C) RACAN TOUTED CROATIA'S STRONG RECORD OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND SAID THE GOC WAS STRONGLY INCLINED TO LIFT ITS VISA REQUIREMENT FOR CITIZENS OF YUGOSLAVIA, THOUGH THIS WAS POLITICALLY QUITE SENSITIVE. HE REMARKED THAT SUCH CROATIAN LIBERALIZATION WOULD, IRONICALLY, COME JUST AS HUNGARY IMPOSES A VISA REQUIREMENT ON THE FRY.

¶12. (C) ON CROATIA'S RELATIONS WITH ICTY, RACAN ASSERTED THAT CROATIA IS IN FULL COMPLIANCE AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO CLOSE COOPERATION HAS BEEN VALIDATED BY ITS APPROACH TO THE BOBETKO CASE. FIRST, THE VERY PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF HOW LACK OF COOPERATION WITH ICTY WOULD AFFECT CROATIA'S CHANCES TO ENTER THE EU AND NATO HAVE SHORED UP

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	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00
	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00
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PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE GOC POSITION, SECOND, THE OPPOSITION'S ATTEMPTS TO DESTABILIZE THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE FAILED, AND THIRD, CROATIA'S CONSTITUTIONAL COURT RULED THAT ICTY IS THE COURT OF JURISDICTION FOR ALL FUTURE APPEALS, CUTTING OFF OPPOSITION LEGAL MANEUVERS. HE CLAIMED THAT ICTY IS NOW "OFF OF THE EU AGENDA," AND HIS UPCOMING VISIT TO THE UK WILL TAKE PLACE IN THAT CONTEXT. RACAN ADDED THAT WITH THE BOBETKO CASE SOON TO REACH FINAL RESOLUTION, "NOW GOTOVINA HAS BECOME TOPICAL," BUT HE STRESSED THAT "CROATIA WILL NOT BE HELD HOSTAGE BY GENERAL GOTOVINA."

¶13. (C) AS IN ALL HER BILATERAL MEETINGS, DASD RICARDEL THANKED CROATIA FOR ITS SUPPORT TO AND CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM. WITH RACAN, SHE ALSO LAID DOWN A MARKER FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE REQUESTS FOR LANDING RIGHTS AND TRANSIT OF U.S. PERSONNEL EN ROUTE TO THE MIDDLE EAST REGION FOR MOVEMENT OF FORCES RELATED TO IRAQ; WHILE HE MADE NO COMMITMENTS, HE EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT SUCH REQUESTS WOULD BE FAVORABLY REVIEWED. DASD RICARDEL TOLD RACAN THAT SHE HAD GIVEN THE BDC PLENARY SESSION A BLUNT BRIEFING ON THE THREATS OF PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION; THE USG APPRECIATES PAST GOC SUPPORT IN REFRAINING FROM SALES OF WEAPONS OR DUAL-USE ITEMS TO STATE SPONSORS OF TERRORISM AND URGED CONTINUED ADHERENCE TO THIS POLICY OF NOT SELLING WEAPONS TO LIBYA AND SIMILAR STATES.

¶14. (C) RICARDEL PRESSED RACAN TO MOVE FORWARD WITH DEFENSE REFORMS AND EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFICULT ROAD AHEAD; THE U.S. WOULD CONTINUE TO ASSIST WHERE IT CAN. RICARDEL SAID THE U.S. WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT CROATIA'S RESTRUCTURING EFFORTS AS IT MAKES ITS BID FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP

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AND URGED RACAN TO SUPPORT THE REFORMS IDENTIFIED IN THE MAP AND REVIEW PROCESS, PARTICULARLY THOSE RELATING TO CIVIL SOCIETY ISSUES LIKE REFUGEE RETURN.

¶15. (C) DASD RICARDEL TOUCHED ON THE ISSUE OF THE USG'S OUTSTANDING REQUEST TO SIGN AN ARTICLE 98 AGREEMENT WITH CROATIA. SHE EXPLAINED U.S. LEGISLATION MAKING PROVISION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ALL NON-NATO STATES CONTINGENT ON SIGNING SUCH AN AGREEMENT BY JULY 1, 2003; USG MILITARY ASSISTANCE IS ESSENTIAL FOR CROATIA TO ACHIEVE ITS MODERNIZATION AND INTEROPERABILITY GOALS. RACAN EXPLAINED THAT CROATIA IS CAUGHT BETWEEN THE EU'S INSISTENCE THAT CANDIDATES TO THE EU LINE AND THE USG'S INSISTENCE ON AN CIC EXEMPTION. HE CONTINUES TO WAIT FOR A CLEAR SIGNAL FROM BRUSSELS BEFORE MOVING FORWARD. THE AMBASSADOR TOLD RACAN THAT USG-EU DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE, BUT THE EU HAS ALREADY STATED IT DOES NOT OBJECT TO ARTICLE 98 AGREEMENTS, BUT HAS SIMPLY SET A LIST OF CRITERIA WHICH SHOULD BE ADDRESSED. STRESSING THE APPROACHING DEADLINE UNDER U.S. LEGISLATION, THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT TO RACAN THAT THE GOC EVENTUALLY MAY HAVE TO DECIDE BASED ON CROATIA'S GOALS AND NEEDS, NOT THOSE OF THE EU.

116. (C) DASD RICARDEL THANKED PRESIDENT MESIC FOR HIS MORAL LEADERSHIP ON REFORM ISSUES AND FOR HIS INSISTENCE THAT CROATIA MUST CONTINUE TO COOPERATE WITH THE HAGUE. SHE URGED THAT HE LEND HIS LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORT OF THE ISSUE OF DEFENSE DOWNSIZING AND RESTRUCTURING. LIKE RACAN, MESIC

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OUTLINED THE STRONG ECONOMIC PROGRESS THE GOC CONTINUES TO MAKE, BUT EXPRESSED FRUSTRATION AT THE GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO GET ITS MESSAGE OUT TO THE PUBLIC. HE PLEDGED CROATIA'S COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE WITH NECESSARY REFORMS, BUT EXPLAINED THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT IN WHICH THE MOD MUST CARRY OUT DOWNSIZING EFFORTS. MESIC HAILED THE USG COMMITMENT TO ASSIST CROATIA TO COMBAT THE PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION. DASD RICARDEL REQUESTED CROATIA'S CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR IRAQI COMPLIANCE WITH UN RESOLUTIONS NOTING THAT CROATIA EXPERIENCED FIRST-HAND THE CONSEQUENCES OF STATES' NON-COMPLIANCE WITH UN RESOLUTIONS.

CHOD LUCIC: U.S. COOPERATION ALREADY BEARS RESULTS

117. (C) DASD RICARDEL CONGRATULATED CHIEF OF CROATIA'S GENERAL STAFF JOSIP LUCIC ON HIS RECENT APPOINTMENT AND EMPHASIZED THE USG DESIRE TO CONTINUE WITH STRONG BILATERAL MILITARY COOPERATION. LUCIC STRONGLY SUPPORTED U.S. ENGAGEMENT, AND PARTICULARLY HAILED IMET TRAINING PROGRAMS AS AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF U.S. INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF CROATIA'S ARMED FORCES. A RECENT AND ENTHUSIASTIC GRADUATE OF AN IMET ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAM, LUCIC ASSERTED THAT A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF CROATIA'S OFFICERS HAVE BENEFITED FROM THE PROGRAMS. RICARDEL PRESSED LUCIC TO ENSURE THAT CROATIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL TRAINED BY U.S. PROGRAMS ARE

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PLACED IN POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY. LUCIC THANKED THE U.S. FOR THE PROPOSAL OF A COUNTERPART VISIT TO THE U.S. AND HOPED THIS WOULD TAKE PLACE IN AUTUMN 2003.

DEFMIN ANTUNOVIC: COMMITTED TO REFORMS, LOTS OF WORK AHEAD

118. (C) DEFMIN ANTUNOVIC EXPRESSED HER STRONG SATISFACTION WITH THE STRENGTH OF THE U.S. - CROATIAN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. SHE EXPRESSED REGRET AT NOT BEING ABLE TO BE MORE INTIMATELY INVOLVED WITH THE WORK OF THE BDC, BUT EXPLAINED THAT HER MOD IS SIMULTANEOUSLY HOSTING A PARM REVIEW LED BY NATO ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL ALtenBURG. ANTUNOVIC DESCRIBED U.S. ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN CAF MODERNIZATION, ENHANCED INTEROPERABILITY AND TRAINING AND EDUCATION AS ESSENTIAL FOR CROATIA'S PROGRESS. SHE THANKED DASD RICARDEL FOR THE NEW USG COMMITMENT TO HELP CROATIA DEVELOP ITS COUNTER-PROLIFERATION ACTIVITIES.

119. (C) DASD RICARDEL PRESSED ANTUNOVIC TO ADDRESS LEGAL ISSUES WHICH ARE INCREASINGLY LIMITING U.S. - CROATIA BILATERAL MILITARY COOPERATION, SPECIFICALLY FORCE PROTECTION AND VISITS OF U.S. NUCLEAR VESSELS. ANTUNOVIC DESCRIBED GOC PLANS TO RESOLVE CURRENT LEGAL LIMITS PREVENTING IMPLEMENTATION OF POST-USS COLE FORCE PROTECTION STANDARDS ABOARD USN SHIPS IN CROATIAN PORTS. DEFMIN ANTUNOVIC ASSERTED THAT THE CABINET WILL PASS A MEASURE ON FEBRUARY 6 WHICH WILL ALLOW FOR EXECUTIVE BRANCH APPROVAL OF FORCE PROTECTION PRACTICES, WHICH SHOULD CLEAR THE WAY FOR U.S. SHIP VISITS TO RESUME. SHE EXPLAINED THE GOC INTENTIONS TO SEEK CHANGES TO CURRENT MARITIME LAW TO ALLOW FOR THE

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PRESENCE OF NUCLEAR POWERED VESSELS IN CROATIA'S INLAND WATERS, BUT ADMITTED THAT THIS GOAL WOULD TAKE TIME TO ACHIEVE.

¶20. (C) DASD RICARDEL THANKED DEFMIN ANTUNOVIC FOR HER POLICY LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORTING THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM. ANTUNOVIC ASSERTED THAT THE WAR ON TERROR IS BOTH A CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CROATIA TO SHOW WHAT IT STANDS FOR. AT THE END OF THEIR MEETING, DASD RICARDEL AND DEFMIN ANTUNOVIC SIGNED AN AGREEMENT GOVERNING MODALITIES OF PROVISION OF USG ASSISTANCE TO HELP CROATIA DEVELOP ITS CAPABILITY TO COMBAT PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION. ANTUNOVIC NOTED THAT CROATIA WAS GAINING EXPERTISE AND EQUIPMENT AND THE U.S. WAS GAINING A PARTNER. THE EVENT WAS WELL AND POSITIVELY COVERED IN THE CROATIAN PRESS.

¶21. (C) ON FEBRUARY 5, AFTER THE FORMAL CLOSING OF THE BDC, DASD RICARDEL VISITED THE MP PLATOON WHICH WILL DEPLOY IN SUPPORT OF ISAF. SHE WAS HOSTED BY BRIGADIER GENERAL JOSIP STOJKOVIC, COMMANDER OF THE "CROATIA BARRACKS." SHE RECEIVED A BRIEFING ON THE EQUIPMENT AND CAPABILITIES OF THE UNIT, WHICH IS ANTICIPATED TO DEPLOY TO KABUL BY THE END OF FEBRUARY WITH THE GERMAN CONTINGENT. DASD RICARDEL ALSO REVIEWED THE NBC PLATOON DESIGNATED TO BE AVAILABLE FOR PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS BY THE END OF 2003. RICARDEL PRAISED CROATIA'S DETERMINATION TO DEVELOP SPECIALIZED CAPABILITIES TO CONTRIBUTE TO NATO AND COALITION ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS.

¶22. (U) BEGIN TEXT OF JOINT STATEMENT RELEASED AFTER THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SIGNING OF THE WMD AGREEMENT.

RECOGNIZING A COMMON INTEREST IN STRENGTHENING BILATERAL COOPERATION AND PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY, THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND THE CROATIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HELD THE FIRST OF WHAT WILL BECOME REGULAR BILATERAL DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS IN ZAGREB, CROATIA ON FEBRUARY 4, 2003.

THE TEAM FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE WAS LED BY MS. MIRA RICARDEL, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR EURASIA. THE U.S. DELEGATION WAS WELCOMED BY MS. ZELJKA ANTUNOVIC, THE CROATIAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE, MR. ZLATKO GARELJIC, DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER, AND DR. JELENA GRCIC POLIC, ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR DEFENSE POLICY. THE CONSULTATIONS WERE AIMED AT ELABORATING AREAS FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE RESPECTIVE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENTS.

THE U.S. CO-CHAIR EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR CROATIA'S INCREASING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM.

THE U.S. AND CROATIA SIGNED THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA CONCERNING COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF PREVENTION OF PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, AND THE PROMOTION OF DEFENSE AND MILITARY

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00
	DOEE-00	PERC-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	FBIE-00	VC-00
	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00
	AC-01	DCP-01	NRRC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OES-00	OIC-02
	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00
	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00
	DTC-00	EPAE-00	SSD-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-01
	G-00	SSR-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/008W	

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TO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9403
INFO JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 05 OF 05 ZAGREB 000284

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SCE
SECDEF FOR DASD EURASIA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/05/2013
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SUBJECT: DASD RICARDEL LEADS BILATERAL DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS IN CROATIA

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RELATIONS. THIS AGREEMENT ESTABLISHES THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR JOINT EFFORTS TO COUNTER PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND IMPROVE CROATIA'S BORDER SECURITY CAPABILITIES.

AS A RESULT OF THE BILATERAL DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS, BOTH SIDES AGREED TO FOCUS EFFORTS OVER THE FORTHCOMING YEAR ON ATTAINING MUTUAL-DETERMINED GOALS IN THE FOLLOWING THREE AREAS: FIRST, DEVELOPING CAPABILITIES TO ENHANCE CROATIA'S INTEROPERABILITY WITH NATO; SECOND, SUPPORTING NECESSARY DEFENSE REFORM AND MODERNIZATION PROGRAMS FOR THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES; AND, THIRD, PURSUING JOINT ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA OF BORDER SECURITY AND MARITIME INTERDICTION OPERATIONS.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION, JOINT EXERCISES, AND REGULAR DEFENSE CONTACTS ARE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF THESE AREAS OF COOPERATION.

THE SIDES REAFFIRMED THE IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTHENING RELATIONS AND COOPERATION, AS WELL AS PROMOTING SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE REGION. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA PLAN TO EXPLORE AND DEVELOP FURTHER INITIATIVES TO MORE MEET COMMON SECURITY CHALLENGES MORE EFFECTIVELY. BOTH SIDES AGREED TO HOLD BILATERAL DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS AGAIN NEXT YEAR WITH THE UNITED STATES HOSTING.

END TEXT OF JOINT STATEMENT

¶23. (U) DASD RICARDEL CLEARED THIS MESSAGE.
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